

INDUSTRIAL WELFARE WORK.

SUMTER ELECTRICAL COMPANY DOING A BIG WORK FOR FEMALE EMPLOYEES.

Interesting Account of the Working Conditions and Company Boarding House Provided for the Hundreds of Young Women Employed in the Magneto Factory.

(By E. I. Reardon, Secretary Chamber of Commerce.

The Sumter Electrical Company and its allied companies, said to be the largest in the world exclusively engaged in the manufacture of ignition magnetos for gasoline propelled machinery of all kinds has established and is engaged in extending a system of looking after the comfort, health, and morals of their female operatives which deserves the highest commendation from the public and particularly those engaged or interested in welfare work among working women.

This Sumter manufacturing plant employs now two hundred women, ranging in age from eighteen to forty years of age, the young women predominating largely. Within a comparatively short time it will be necessary to increase the force of female operatives to four hundred, just as soon as additional winding machinery boards and appliances can be manufactured, and the additional space required can be fitted up properly, according to Sumter Electrical Company ideas of how the working quarters of female operatives should be arranged.

Realizing that it would be almost impossible to secure sufficient local young women to supply the demand for female operatives in this plant, this corporation cast about for a solution of this problem.

The first consideration to be solved was that the young women, coming from abroad must be looked after with due regard to their health, personal comforts, proper housing, feeding, social, spiritual, and physical environment. Healthy, happy, and satisfied labor was deemed the very best kind of labor. Congeniality of surroundings and social environment was considered essential in order to have a crew of girls working harmoniously together, and in a satisfied frame of mind.

The management of this big corporation capitalized at four and a half million dollars requested the cooperation of the Sumter Chamber of Commerce in securing sufficient female help, and in securing suitable boarding house accommodation for the ladies.

The managing secretary of this organization was urged to assist in arranging the working quarters of the female operatives with due regard to the comfort and physical welfare of the operatives.

He was instructed to speak out plainly any suggestions which he might have or to suggest anything additional which would contribute to the comfort of the operatives.

As a temporary expediency the first floor of a large and splendidly ventilated and lighted department of this immense plant was selected as the "woman's working room" as it was called.

This department fronts on one of the main streets of this city, and it is located remote from the other departments of the big factory. The female operatives never come in contact with any other department of the factory, their department being strictly private at all times, and they enter and leave their department on a different street from the male operatives.

Lately the rush of business has necessarily created a demand for more female operatives in the winding departments. So that this company has been compelled to renovate the second floor of the same building to accommodate the increasing number of young women now employed and to accommodate several hundred more very soon.

This newly equipped department on the second floor is a model working room in many respects. No expense was considered too great to equip this new department as it should be for the comfort and health of the operatives.

One of the latest improved systems of lighting by electricity, in addition to numerous large windows, has just been installed so that there will be ample light for the operatives during cloudy days and late in the afternoon during the winter months when darkness comes early. The company determined that insofar as the lighting facilities were concerned, natural and artificial, there should be no straining of eyesight among its operatives.

Then there are facilities for numbers of electrically operated fans for the warm days, and big fans for carrying out the foul air in the winter time and for sweeping in an abundance of fresh air. Hygienic conditions are ideal in every respect. Ample lavatory and toilet facilities accord-

ing to modern ideas of sanitation are provided.

The entire plant is being arranged for a steam heating system.

The managing secretary of the Sumter Chamber of Commerce was phoned for a few days ago to go down to the general office of the plant. He was met by Mr. H. R. VanDeventer, the general manager, and Mr. J. A. Warren, superintendent of the plant. The commercial secretary was instructed to go through every department of this big plant with Superintendent Warren and to make any criticism he felt like, if he saw anything that he thought was not conducive to the physical welfare of any of the operatives.

He was also invited to go over and thoroughly inspect the company's boarding house for female operatives and make any suggestions or complaints he might think necessary.

The men operatives looked happy and healthy and had smiles on their faces, and the visitor was accorded a cordial welcome by the male operative's department heads and hundreds of the operatives. It was to be seen at a glance that nothing was desirable to add to the comfort of the male operatives.

Being more particularly interested in how numbers of young women who in how numbers of young women who ment in a strange city, and also how the Sumter girls were getting along and were being treated, the secretary went over to the "women's working room."

Here he found two hundred women and girls like one big family gathering and about as healthy, happy, and contented a bunch of females as any one would wish to see.

There are no rigid factory or "sweat shop" restrictions placed on these young women. They are like school girls on the "honor system" as it were, and while busy, seem to be all happy and contented.

The only thing pertaining to rigid requirements about this plant is that the reputation of every woman employed therein must be first class in every way. It matters not who an applicant may be or where she comes from her recommendations as to her moral character, habits, temperament, and physical conditions must be of the best.

Every applicant for a position must produce a certificate of character from three well known and reputable men of her home community that she is morally upright and her reputation unquestioned.

This company has furnished a splendid home under the management of Mrs. Joseph Joye within a half block of the women's working room, and within sight of the plant.

The boarding and lodging house is heated by steam, electrically lighted throughout, and Mrs. Joye is like a mother to every one of the girls. The rates for board are very low as the house is not run to make money, but Mrs. Joye chaperones the crowd of thirty-five or forty young women under her care. No rigid boarding school rules govern this boarding house, however. The young women are just as though they were at home. But Mrs. Joye is official censor, so to speak, of whom these young women associate with, and who calls on them, whom they go out with, etc.

The rooms of the young women are kept in good sanitary condition and well aired and attended to in every possible way. Fire escapes are provided from every floor of the three-story building. Accommodations for seventy-five are to be had in this building. Modern sanitary conveniences, baths, toilet, etc., are furnished.

It has been determined that should a profit be made at any time the net proceeds will be devoted to additional conveniences for the physical and social comfort and pleasure of the boarders. As soon as this home is fully occupied another will be equipped and started up.

What the Sumter Electrical Company is seeking to do is to solve a problem of securing a sufficient number of contented, well trained, and well paid female operatives to keep the plant running, because female operatives are very necessary, but not as easily obtained down South as are male operatives.

The company prefers to employ native girls, that is Sumter county, or South Carolina or Southern raised girls if they can be secured. Young women from one county, State, or section get along better together.

The average wage earned by these young women is about \$20.00 a month, although many make as high as \$2.00 per day. The wage depends on the wage earner, her industry, skill, and desire to earn money.

Beginners are guaranteed a fixed sum per day as an inducement to learn and in order that every beginner will be assured of sufficient funds for her board, lodging, and incidental expenses. But in a couple of weeks they almost invariably pass the probationary stage and earn at least \$1.00 or more per day. Their work is very light, cleanly, they sit down at their tasks, there is no dust or dirt about the work room.

The superintendent manifests a

great interest in the contented state of mind of his girl operatives. He visits the boarding house once a week and finds out if there are any "unpleasantnesses" and if there be he holds a kind of investigation. The girls appear to seek his intermediary offices, and tell their sides of any little difference of opinion to their superintendent and friend who is also a church man and a Sunday school worker. He invariably settles any unfriendly "spats" as his opinion goes and the disputants get friendly instead of getting more and more "grouchy" towards each other. This will appear to some doubtless as officious on the part of the superintendent. But results prove to the contrary. They seem to like one another and to get along together admirably.

When a young woman, or one of mature age for that matter seeks employment with the Sumter Electrical Company she is assured of a good position, with living wages at least, and humane treatment amid pleasant and congenial surroundings.

Of course there are numbers of girls and women employed by this company who board at home or with private families. But they are all given to understand that the company is interested in them and their happiness comfort and health.

A great many of the female operatives are from the country districts of Sumter and other South Carolina counties, but not a few are from other Southern States. It will not be so very long before between five and six hundred women will have to be employed by this company, if the business keeps on growing and the demand for the magnetos keeps up.

So anxious is this company to solve the problem of satisfied female labor, and break down the prejudice among Southern women so largely in vogue with Southern girls of intelligence and culture against what is termed "factory work" that this company is spending thousands of dollars to show that a young lady can be a lady, just as well thought of, and associate with any one she wishes even in an industrial plant down South.

Some of Sumter's best families are represented in the working room of this electrical company, and young women of splendid families from other places. None but ladies and those who conduct themselves as ladies are permitted in the Sumter Electrical Company plant.

The Sumter Chamber of Commerce is very much interested in the workings of the plan being carried out by the Sumter Electrical Company. Sumter's industrial future depends largely on our ability to secure ample labor of the right kind, male and female for industrial plants of many kinds.

The Sumter Electrical Company is doing a great work for Sumter as well as solving its own problems satisfactorily indeed.

Thousands of dollars are being earned by highly respectable and worthy young women in this company's plant. Their home-like surroundings, in plant and boarding house, are conducive to their pleasures, profit, spiritual, physical, and social welfare.

The fact that this company voluntarily invites and seeks commercial organization investigation and assistance, and other outside cooperation shows how deeply in earnest the Sumter Electrical Company is in finding out how to make the life of a working girl all that it should be in an industrial plant.

A rather unique feature of the Sumter Electrical Company's plan of conserving the mental and physical efficiency of its operatives in order to get the highest degree of efficiency in output is as follows:

The writer learned from an operative, not from an official, that the heads of department are instructed to watch closely the temperamental condition of his operatives. That is if an operative appears "down in the mouth" or below normal in interest or efficiency in work to find out if possible what his trouble is. This applies in every department, male and female.

Confidences are exchanged. It not infrequently turns out that an operative has a sick wife or child and that his or her financial condition does not warrant the proper medical treatment. If this is discovered the company sees that this operative's troubles are looked after even in some instances of sending the sick to the city hospital or lending money for emergencies to their operatives. This act improves the mental condition of the operative, begets his gratitude, and his loyalty, and secures his permanent efficiency.

Students of welfare work throughout the country, industrial plant managements in particular can learn much from the Sumter Electrical Company's welfare plans. After awhile when the plans are worked out in this plant people will be writing or coming to Sumter to get information about the Sumter Electrical Company's treatment of operatives, women in particular, like hundreds are now seeking information about the Sumter municipal form of government. All it requires is time. The business ability,

good intentions, and the determination to succeed in solving this problem are here, and the results will surely follow. The writer is glad to have been invited to enlist and to assist. I will gladly follow the workings and do my best in my feeble way for the working women and the working men. Perhaps this Sumter inauguration of humane and cooperative efforts between capital and labor may yet revolutionize the problems of unsatisfied labor and antagonistic attitudes between capital and labor.

Beginning November 22nd, the Sumter Electrical Works operate night and day shifts, and within six months confidently expects to increase its number of operatives to between 1,000 and 1,200, of which about fifty per cent. will probably be female operatives, if the machinery and operatives can be secured.

The entire floor space, formerly occupied by the Sumter Telephone Manufacturing Company, before this electrical company stopped manufacturing telephones to manufacture magnetos, about one hundred thousand square feet, is now given over to making magnetos.

One feature of the company's operations that is interesting is that it found after careful investigations and figuring that it is cheaper to purchase electric motive power from the local power company than to undertake to install its own power plant for either steam or electricity.

The local power company furnishes even the steam for the heating system of the Sumter Electrical Company as well as the electrical motive power for operating the entire plant. And the local electric power gets its power from coal instead of water power.

There is not a steam boiler on the premises of the electrical company and fire risk is reduced to a minimum.

So it seems that Sumter has very reasonable electric power rates though not located on a river or canal. Practically every industrial plant in Sumter requiring motive power is supplied by the Sumter Light and Power Company. As a manufacturing center, judging from the great success of the Sumter Electrical Company, and other Sumter manufacturing plants, taken in connection with Sumter's unexcelled distributing facilities with nine lines of railroad, operated by four railway systems, it seems that Sumter can show up with almost any town or city in the Southern States.

Sumter has solved numerous problems, municipal, manufacturing, motive power, and other problems, and the statement "that Sumter is decidedly original" in many respects is correct.

TEN MILES ON RAILROAD READY

Charleston-Savannah Extension Construction Going Ahead Fast.

Charleston Post.

Ten of the eighty-six miles of the Charleston-Savannah extension of the Seaboard Air Line railway have been completed and the work on the rest of the line is being pushed on rapidly. Construction gangs are at work at several places upon the right of way. The officials want the road to be so far advanced that after the erection of the bridges there will be very little left to be done. The whole line must be ready by September 1, 1916, according to the contract.

W. L. Seddon, of Savannah, and W. R. Bonsor, of Charleston, who were recently elected vice presidents of the Seaboard went over the line of the extension from Charleston to Savannah in an automobile this week. They left this city at 7:30 Tuesday morning and arrived in Savannah at 5:30 in the afternoon. They were thus able to inspect minutely the progress of the work on the extension.

Permission for the erection of the bridges has been secured from the War Department and it will not be long before the building of the substantial structures will be started. The government's permission had to be secured, due to the fact that most of the streams crossed are navigable, and drawbridges, allowing the passage of vessels, will have to be built. Six bridges will be erected in the Charleston district of the United States engineers and several in the Savannah district.

Speaking of the promotion of C. S. Lake, formerly general superintendent of the Seaboard, to the position of general manager, Vice President Seddon stated in Savannah he did not believe there would be any further changes. He thought that the Seaboard would adopt the plan of other roads of having a general manager and superintendent. Mr. Lake will shortly begin a trip of inspection over the Carolina, Atlantic and Western Railway, of which Mr. Bonsor has been president and which was absorbed by the Seaboard. Vice President Bonsor will have charge of the construction of the Charleston extension of the Seaboard, while Seddon will direct the operating forces of the Seaboard. Vice President C. R. Capps remains in charge of traffic.

POSTOFFICE CHANGES.

Clerk Becomes Rural Carrier and Rural Carrier Becomes City Carrier.

Recently a three-cornered change has been made in the postoffice, a change which has affected the rural, and city delivery clerks and the postoffice clerical force.

Mr. J. Brogdon Jones, who for fourteen years has been rural carrier on route No. 2 from Sumter during which time he has never made a mistake in his reports, was changed from his rural route to No. 3 in the city. Mr. Murray Griffin, who has been carrier clerk on route three in town for several years, was changed to a clerk in the postoffice. Mr. Riley Jackson, formerly a clerk in the postoffice, was changed from this position to carrier clerk on rural route No. 2, taking Mr. Jones' place there. The change was desired by all of the parties concerned and the postoffice department author-

ized the change on the recommendation of the local postmaster.

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